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TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN FICTION

DR. LAUREN RULE MAXWELL

ENGLISH 346—SPRING 2015

TR 9:30-10:45 a.m., 105 Capers Hall

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Office Hours: W 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
and 1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

or by appointment, 119B Capers Hall

OVERVIEW:

This course focuses on masterpieces of American fiction from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. During the course of the semester, we will consider the significance of these works: Why are they so widely read, and what do they tell us about the changing face of America? Our class discussion will orient these novels and short stories in the context of literary and social movements to highlight how these works both reflect their own times and serve as meditations on American history.

TEXTS:

The Great Gatsby (Fitzgerald)

The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (The Finca Vigía Edition)

Light in August (Faulkner)

The Oxford Book of American Short Stories (ed. Oates)

Blood Meridian (McCarthy)

Beloved (Morrison)

The Road (McCarthy)

RECOMMENDED ONLINE RESOURCES:

The Citadel Writing Center: www.citadel.edu/asc

<http://www.citadel.edu/library/Research/english.htm>

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americannovel/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance – College regulations regarding attendance apply. You must come to class having done all of your reading and be ready to participate in discussions. Please bring the required text with you to class; if you don't, you will receive a zero for your daily participation grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what we covered and come prepared for the following class. If you are absent on the day of a quiz, you will receive a zero unless the absence is excused. Please note that this class will begin at the scheduled time.

Deadlines – All assignments are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise specified. If you have an excused absence on a day when assignments are due, you must submit your work in advance or make alternate arrangements for its submission. Late papers will be docked a full letter grade for each day that they are late.

Notebook and Portfolio – To each class you must bring your notebook and a folder containing all of your handouts (including this syllabus), essays, essay notes, drafts, quizzes, and tests. I may ask for your notebook and portfolio at any point during the semester.

Class Wiki – After every reading assignment you will post a response that is a minimum of two paragraphs to the class wiki: www.citadelamericanfiction.wikispaces.com. You will create a profile on the wiki on which you might add content that you think will enrich our class discussion and understanding of the works. I also will use the wiki and will post assigned critical articles there.

Honor Code – The Honor Code will be strictly enforced and applies to all assignments. You should be aware that plagiarism of any kind is a serious violation of the Honor Code and that any incident of academic dishonesty is will be reported to the Honor Court. Please come to me with questions regarding proper documentation and citation of sources.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES:

➤ **Discussion posts and daily participation: 30%**

The primary objectives of this class are analysis of American fiction and, more broadly, critical discussion about ways that these works reflect and influence national identity. Fulfilling these objectives necessarily involves responding to the texts and to others' positions. Therefore it is very important that you prepare for class and actively participate in discussion both online and in class.

For every reading assignment, you will write a response post about the reading that is at least two paragraphs. You must post this response to the class wiki by 10:00 p.m. the night before class. In this post, I would like for you to highlight aspects of the reading that interest you and pose topics or questions that we can discuss in class. Your online posts and contributions to the class wiki will count toward 20% of your final grade; in-class participation will count toward 10% of your final grade.

➤ **Three in-class exams 30% (10% each)**

➤ **Research paper (10-15 pages) 30%**

Papers are to be submitted at the beginning of class the day they are due. They should be prepared in MLA format: double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font and stapled with your name appearing on every page. Pages should be numbered and have one-inch margins. Papers for this course should consult a minimum of four critical sources.

Paper grades assess the following criteria:

- Critical sophistication and significance
- Strength of argument and discussion of overall topic's importance
- Clarity of expression (clearly articulated theses and well-organized supporting paragraphs)
- Language use (style, tone, grammar, etc.)
- Evidence of scholarship (engagement with relevant critical and theoretical work)
- Creative presentation of critical thinking

➤ **Final examination 10%**

COURSE OUTLINE

Be prepared to discuss readings on the days scheduled on the course outline.
The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus as she sees fit.

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|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| R 1/15 | Course introduction; review plagiarism and proper citation practices; in-class writing; discuss wiki; introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald and <i>The Great Gatsby</i> |
| T 1/20 | <i>The Great Gatsby</i> through Chapter V |
| R 1/22 | Finish <i>The Great Gatsby</i> |
| T 1/27 | “From Wonderland to Wasteland”;
Conclude discussion on <i>The Great Gatsby</i> |
| R 1/29 | Hemingway stories: “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber,” “Cat in the Rain,” “Hills Like White Elephants” |
| T 2/3 | Hemingway stories: “Soldier’s Home,” “In Another Country,” “Now I Lay Me” |
| R 2/5 | Hemingway stories: “Indian Camp,” “Big Two-Hearted River,” “A Way You’ll Never Be,”
“Nick at Nite: Nocturnal Metafictions in Three Hemingway Short Stories” |
| T 2/10 | Exam 1 |
| R 2/12 | <i>Light in August</i> through Chapter 9 |
| T 2/17 | <i>Light in August</i> through Chapter 16 |
| R 2/19 | Finish <i>Light in August</i> |
| T 2/24 | “American Emergencies: Whiteness, the National Guard, and <i>Light in August</i> ”
Conclude discussion on <i>Light in August</i> |
| R 2/26 | From <i>The Oxford Book of American Short Stories</i> : Wright’s “The Man Who Was Almost a Man” and Ellison’s “Battle Royal” |
| T 3/3 | Exam 2 |
| R 3/5 | <i>Blood Meridian</i> through Chapter X |
| T 3/10 | <i>Blood Meridian</i> through Chapter XVIII |
| R 3/12 | Finish <i>Blood Meridian</i> |
| T 3/17 | “Dis(re)membered Bodies: Cormac McCarthy’s Border Fiction”;
Conclude discussion on <i>Blood Meridian</i> |
| R 3/19 | <i>Beloved</i> Part I; sign up for paper conferences to be held after break |
| T 3/24 | Spring Break—No class |

- R 3/26** **Spring Break—No class**
- T 3/31** *Beloved*, Parts II and III
- R 4/2** **During class time or on Wednesday afternoon (depending on the slot you signed up for) you will meet with me to discuss your ideas for the paper. You must bring an outline and the citations of at least two critical works that you will reference in your paper.**
- T 4/7** “Postmodern Blackness: Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and the End of History”;
Conclude discussion of *Beloved*
- R 4/9** **Exam 3**
- T 4/14** *The Road*
- R 4/16** *The Road*
- T 4/21** **Papers Due; Paper Presentations**
- R 4/23** From *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories*: King’s “The Reach” and Erdrich’s “Fleur”
- T 4/28** Last class—in-class writing and exam review
- S 5/2** **Final Exam at 8:00 a.m.** (bring two blue books)